## VA in the News

#### **60 Years of Federal Service and Counting**

Vila Hunter was honored by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony J. Principi, for achieving a remarkable 60 years of Federal service. At a private ceremony held April 1, 2003, she was presented with a personal letter from President Bush, the Secretary's Exceptional Service Award, and a beautiful gift box. Her achievement won her the cover story on the March/April issue of VA's nationally distributed publication, VAnguard (see **SERVICE**, Page 2).

Ms. Hunter, a Management Analyst with OHRM's Workforce Information Systems Team (WIST), began her Federal service as a Junior Clerk Typist with the War Production Board in August 1942. After several years with the Civilian Production Administration, she joined the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office in February 1948. Her first VA assignment was as a File Clerk, CAF-2 in the Office of Insurance, Actuarial Service, where she remained until 1960.

In September 1960, Ms. Hunter was promoted to the position of Statistical Assistant, GS-7, in Reports and Statistics under the Office of the Controller. Although her division was subsequently realigned under several or-

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ganizations, such as the Office of Information Management and Statistics, Office of Information and Analysis, and the Office of Financial Management, she established herself and remained a reliedupon cornerstone for statistical reports and information.

In March 1992, her function was realigned



Secretary Anthony J. Principi presents Vi Hunter with his Exceptional Service Award.

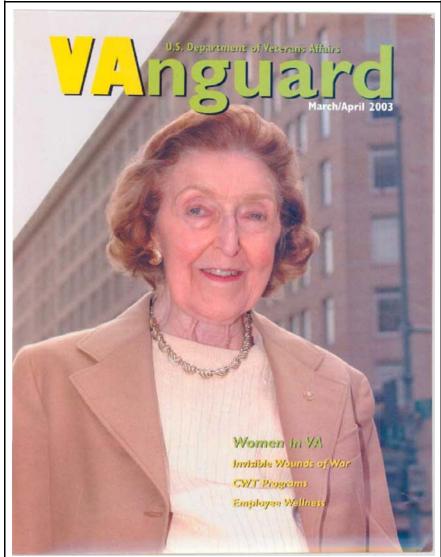
under the Office of Human Resources Management where she remains employed to date.

Ms. Hunter has accrued 55 years of her total Federal service with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Continued Page 2, See SERVICE



#### **SERVICE**, Continued from Cover



Vila Hunter shown on the March/April cover of VA's nationally distributed magazine, VAnguard.

During those years, she became the resident expert in understanding the PAID system and how to extract information from the database to produce statistical analysis and reports containing information germane to the issue at hand. Her intimate knowledge of VA's many pay systems, appointment types, cost center code schemes, occupational code and titling practices are but a few examples of the expertise she displays and uses in responding to customer requirements. Her technical expertise has been supplemented by her extensive historical knowledge of VA. As "keeper of the data," Ms. Hunter can readily recite the changes resulting from the many reorganizations that have occurred throughout VA's history.

While she has been responsible for generating routine and ad hoc reports, it has been her ability to push the limitations of the PAID program to the edge in extracting data and formulating reports on a moment's notice that has earned her the reputation she enjoys today. Her services have supported the Secretary and other top management officials, Office of Management and Budget hearings, Congressional hearings, responses to the media, and overall workload management throughout the Department. Her results have had Department-wide impact in many arenas and given confidence to those who use the data in defending VA's programs, developing human resources and budgetary requirements and making a case for the Department's effectiveness and efficiencies.

Ms. Hunter's helpful disposition and unwavering patience have defined her role in VA and benefited the Department for many years.

Feel free to contact **HR Highlights** via e-mail anytime to submit news, articles, or other information that may be suitable for inclusion in this publication. We also invite questions and comments.

Highlights@mail.va.gov





#### **VA Reaches Out To Potential Candidates At The** 2003 Presidential Management Intern Job Fair



Janice Lucas (1) and Max Collier (r) of OHRM's Office of Marketing and Recruitment staff were among many VA representatives at the PMI job fair.

Sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and held at the new Convention Center in Washington, DC, on April 14-16, thousands of Presidential Management Intern (PMI) finalists flooded Exhibit Hall C, to attend the 2003 PMI Job Fair.

The job fair was structured to include several panel discussions, question and answer sessions, extravagant agency exhibits, "rap" sessions, and private agency interviews for PMI finalists.

With over 120 exhibit tables and more than 135 private interviewing areas, VA occupied 8 exhibit tables, 10 interview booths, and also had access to an overflow room for interviewina. VA was well represented with recruiters from the National Cemetery Administration, Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, Access and Outreach Management, Office of Policy and Planning, Philadelphia Medical Center and Insurance Center, as well as VACO's Office of Human Resources Management.

Almost every Federal agency was represented at the job fair. Many agencies counted on attracting PMI finalists by displaying free trinkets and other items in their exhibit areas. Although there were a few nice items available at VA exhibit tables, VA's reputation as

an "Employer of Choice" seemed to be the main reason most of the PMI finalists were attracted to VA.

VA representatives greeted thousands of PMI finalists, conducted over 175 interviews, and answered an insurmountable number of employment and agency-related questions. While VACO only recruited a total of six PMIs in 2002, Willie Hensley, Director of OHRM's new Office of Marketing and Recruitment, recently stated that "the Department plans to triple the number of Presidential Management Interns, from 6 that

were hired last year, to more than 20 this year."

One sure way for VA to increase the number of PMIs hired in 2003, was to make a strong impact at the 2003 PMI Job Fair. With several PMI finalists expressing interest in the Department,

"the Department plans to triple the number of Presidential Manage-

were hired last year, to more than 20 this year." - W. Hensley Director, Office of Marketing and Recruitment

ment Interns, from 6 that

and more than 175 on-site interviews conducted, this goal should not be hard to meet.

OHRM, along with the collaborative efforts of the Administrations and other represented VA facilities, made a huge impact at this job fair. The Office of Marketing and Recruitment feels that this is just the beginning of a 'strong' recruitment effort on behalf of the Department.

VA representatives were available to market VA as an "Employer of Choice," and to answer any participant employment questions.

For more information on the Presidential Management Intern Program, contact Max Collier on (202) 273-9758.

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# National HR News

## Retroactive 2003 Pay Adjustment



The President signed an Executive Order to implement retroactive locality pay increases costing approximately 1 percent of payroll. The pay adjustment is effective as of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2003. The additional pay increase attributable to the new locality pay rates ranges from about 0.9 percent (in the Rest of U.S. locality pay area and a few other areas) to about 1.7 percent (in the San Francisco area) for most covered employees, including the non-General Schedule (GS) employees whom the 2003 GS locality payments have already been extended.

The new 2003 salary tables are posted on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Web site at http://www.opm.gov/oca/payrates/index/asp. The new rates of pay reflect a 4.1 percent overall average pay adjustment, as required by the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003 (Public Law 108-7, February 20, 2003).

**SCHEDULED RATES OF BASIC PAY** - The President's Executive Order does not increase the scheduled rates of basic pay for GS and the other statutory pay systems. Executive Order 13282, December 31, 2002, provides an across-the-board increase of 3.1 percent in the rates of basic pay for the statutory pay systems: the GS, the Foreign Service schedule, and certain schedules for the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This across-the-board increase remains unchanged.

GS LOCALITY PAY LIMITATION - Under 5 U.S.C. 5304(g)(1), locality-adjusted rates of pay for GS employees may not exceed the rate payable for level IV of the Executive Schedule (\$134,000 in 2003). As a result of the increase in locality percentages for 2003, the locality-adjusted rate for GS-15, step 10, in the San Francisco locality pay area otherwise would exceed the rate for level IV. Therefore, the GS-15, step 10, locality-adjusted rate is limited to \$134,000 for all GS employees in the San Francisco locality pay area.

**2003 SPECIAL SALARY RATES** - The 2003 special salary rate schedules are not affected by the increase in locality pay percentages for 2003. The 2003 special rate schedules approved as a result of OPM's annual review of special salary rates remain in effect. Since a special rate employee receives the greater of the applicable salary rate or the locality rate for his or her grade and step, agencies must compare employee's special rate with the new locality pay rate to ensure the employee is paid from the proper schedule.

**LOCALITY PAY FOR NON-GS EMPLOYEES** - On December 5, 2002, the President's Pay Agent (the Secretary of Labor, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Director of the OPM) extended the 2003 locality payments to the same Government-wide and single-agency categories of employees that were authorized to receive the 2002 locality payments. Based on this action, the new 2003 locality payments that apply to GS employees will also apply retroactively to these same categories of employees. Covered employees include members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), employees in senior level and scientific or professional positions, administrative law judges, administrative appeals judges, and members of Boards of Contract Appeals. By law, Executive Schedule officials are not authorized to receive locality pay.

For more information regarding the 2003 retroactive pay increase, including questions about the new salary tables and general questions about the calculation of locality pay percentages, locality rates of pay, biweekly caps on premiun pay, and post-separation payments - should be addressed to OPM's Center for Pay and Performance Policy at (202) 606-2880 or by e-mail at pay-performance-policy@opm.gov

For further assistance within VA, contact OHRM's Compensation and Classification Administration at (202) 273-9801.



# OHRM Highlights

# OHRM Discusses Pay Strategies With Visiting Japanese Delegates



Pictured L to R: Mr. Hideki Goda, Dr. Kazutoshi Koshiro, Ventris C. Gibson and Donna Schroeder.

Dr. Kazutoshi Koshiro, Professor, Yokohama National University, and Mr. Hideki Goda, Chief Remuneration Research Office, National Personnel Authority (equivalent of OPM) recently visited the United States to gather information on how to determine pay in different localities for various occupational categories. Ventris C. Gibson, DAS for Human Resources Management, and Donna Schroeder provided the delegation with complete information on recruitment, merit staffing and relocation, and responded to general questions regarding the public sector.

OHRM observed all appropriate and respectful protocol. While in the United States, the Japanese Dignitaries only visited with VA and OPM. Their next stop was London, where they were to meet with the British government on pay strategies in the United Kingdom.

#### Beale Retires from VA



Ventris C. Gibson, DAS for HRM presents Alan with the Secretary's Distinguished Career Award

Alan Beale, OHRM's Acting Associate Director, Compensation and Classification Division, retired on April 3, 2003. His exemplary career was recognized by the Secretary with a Distinguished Career Award.

Mr. Beale began his Federal career on May 18, 1966, as a Mail Clerk at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Baltimore, Maryland. He joined VA on February 24, 1975, as a Contact Representative at the VA Regional Office, Baltimore, Maryland. In July 1976, he then entered the VA Personnel Management Specialist Trainee program at the VA Medical Center (VAMC), Denver, Colorado.

He subsequently served at a number of VA facilities including VAMC Bath, New York; VA Central Office; VAMC Denver, Colorado; the VA Medical & Regional Office Center, Wilmington, Delaware; and VAMC Palo Alto, California, before returning to VA Central Office in February 1984.

During his tenure, Mr. Beale was heavily involved in the reduction in backlog in the Special Rates Division in 1989, was recognized as the agency expert on both Title 5 and Title 38 pay administration issues, was a key player in crafting the legislation that established the locality pay system for VA registered nurses in 1990, and was primarily responsible for the implementation

of the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990. He was also involved in the initiative to review and revise all HR policy which produced the electronic republishing of VA's Personnel Manual.

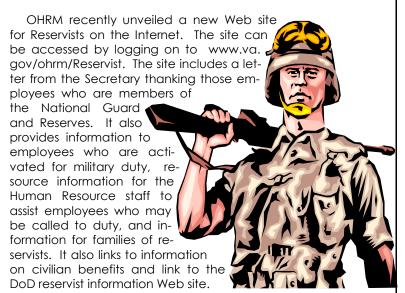
Also to his credit, Mr. Beale held a seat on the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee, developed a Title 5 pay setting guide for use by HR specialists and management officials, which was published on the Internet, and was instrumental in the development of the Title 38 Pay Administration on-line training course for use by HR specialists and interns.

Mr. Beale retires with more than 32 years of federal service. His knowledge and expertise was critical and necessary, and always unselfishly offered to support the mission of OHRM and the Department.

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#### **New Web Site for Reservists**



For more information, contact Joanne Corcoran of OHRM's Workforce Information Systems Team (WIST) at (202) 273-9945.

#### **Web Stats On The Rise**

Statistics currently show that a large number of VA employees nationwide use OHRM's Web site daily to find out what's going on in the Department, to get information about their jobs, and to access online systems they need to do their work. OHRM's Web site averages over 1,462,000 visits monthly and close to 47,200

hits per day. OHRM posted its first Intranet home page in 1997, and it has grown into a Web site with more than 3,400 pages and 20,297 links. The OHRM Intranet was primarily designed, developed, and maintained by one Web master. Since its explosion in size over the last few years, it is now authored by OHRM's Web Team, a group of seven professional content specialists who are part of the various function areas throughout the organization.

You can view the latest changes to the site and retreive up-to-date human resource news and other important information by logging on to http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/.

For more information regarding OHRM's Web site, contact the Web master, Beate Kreiner at (202) 273-5005.

#### New Office of Marketing and Recruitment Invited to Bowie State



OHRM's Janice Lucas (L) conducts a mock interview with a workshop attendee at Bowie State University.

work."

6

panded its outreach to colleges and universities by offering workshops for college students on "How to apply for Federal Jobs" and "Interview Techniques/Procedures."

Janice Lucas, an OMR staff member, conducted the first session at Bowie State University on April 7, 2003. She conducted mock interviews and answered several questions from attendees about employment in the Federal sector and job application procedures. Hensley stated that "the Office of Marketing and Recruitment would be working with each Administration and the

Office of Public Affairs to tell the 'VA story,' and to showcase the Department as an Employer of Choice -- A great place to

The newly created OHRM, Office of Marketing and Recruitment (OMR), has developed an aggressive outreach strategy for the next fiscal year, including participation in several major job fairs and career conferences. OMR spearheaded VA's participation in the Service Academy Career Conference, which attracted over 500 military academy graduates who are separating from active military service. A team of VA recruiters from the three Administrations assisted OMR in showcasing VA and the many career opportunities available throughout the Department. Hensley stated that "marketing VA to veterans is a

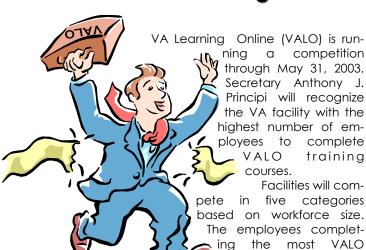
part of the Departinitiative, ployment which is designed to assist veterans in understanding and ap- Employer of ence to their job search in the Federal sector." OMR has ex-

ment's veterans' em- "tell the 'VA story,' and to showcase the Department as an plying veterans prefer- Choice - - A great place to work."

> - W. Hensley Director, Office of Marketing and Recruitment



#### Win With VA Learning Online



To join in the competition, you must register and sign up for a course.

courses will have lunch

with the Secretary and

that facility's director.

If you are using VA's Intranet, the link to visit is vaww.va.gov/valu\_lrn/ and click on VALO, or on the Inter-

net, go to www.vcampus.com/valo. For more information, contact Gabriel Palkuti at Gabriel.Palkuti@mail.va.gov.



#### 5th Annual Federal Workers' Compensation Conference



"Federal Agencies in Partnership: Cooperation, Care and Coordination"

The purpose of this Conference is to bring together all the Federal Agencies for a common cause. This is the only national conference in the country devoted exclusively to job-injured employees covered under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). The curriculum task force members for this 5th Annual Federal Workers' Compensation Conference & Exposition considered all the recommendations presented by the thousands of attendees at the four previous conferences and used these recommendations to develop a totally new curriculum for this year.

> Tuesday, August 5, 2003, 7:00 AM -Thursday, August 7, 2003, 12:00 PM

> > Capital Hilton 1001 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036

#### **REGISTRATION FEES:**

\$550.00 if registered on or before June 30, 2003 \$625.00 if registered after June 30, 2003 and at the door

Registration fee includes all conference materials, continental breakfast and breaks each day, and lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday. Early registration is recommended for this very important event. Unlike previous years, hotel rooms and class size will be limited.



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#### **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR FY 2004**

The Office of Human Resources Management is pleased to announce the following Executive Leadership and Development Programs for FY 2004:

**USDA Graduate School's Executive Leadership Program (ELP)** is a year-long leadership development opportunity designed for federal employees at the GS-11-13. ELP is designed to help employees prepare for a challenging and exciting career in leadership and management. Nomination packages should include:

• A completed SF-182 training form with approval signatures (please include Purchase Order number in Block 23 for payment) and a resume, SF-171, or OF-612 signed and dated (original copy).

• Written statement by first-line supervisor that assesses the applicant's potential for leadership or managerial responsibilities.

• Names, titles, agency mailing addresses, and work telephone numbers for applicant's first-line supervisor and agency program coordinator (TBD).

• The tuition for the Class of 2004 Executive Leadership Program is \$3,650.

The nomination deadline for ELP is Friday, July 18, 2003.

#### Excellence in Government and e-Government Fellows Programs are programs

designed for career government leaders who are committed to achieving results for their organization and enhancing their own leadership skills. The e-Government Fellows Program is focused on leaders with particular responsibility for implementing information and communications technologies and strategies. Applicants should rank at the GS/GM-14 or 15 levels. Exceptional manaers at GS/GM-13 level may also apply. Beginning this year, applicants will be able to apply to the programs on-line at www.excelgov.org. Applications are due by June 2, 2003. Admission decisions will be made on a rolling basis with a final deadline of July 14, 2003. Tuition for Excellence in Government Fellow is \$8,500 and e-Government Fellow tuition is \$10,000.

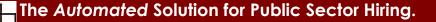


If you have additional questions regarding these programs, please contact Cynthia D. Leach, Employee Development Specialist for Human Resources Development Services (053) at (202) 273-9761 or via email cynthia.leach@mail.va.gov.

Limited brochures are available in VACO, Room 273D.



#### A STAFFING FOR HR STAFFING



The Office of Human Resources Management is coordinating the VA-wide development of

#### USA STAFFING.

The **USA STAFFING** software system is the most costeffective means of getting the best-qualified candidates for public sector hiring in a single, integrated software solution. The complex staffing process of the public sector is simplified with this user-friendly, web-enabled software that completely automates the recruitment, assessment, referral, and notification processes.

#### USA STAFFING automatically -

- Generates vacancy announcements
- Posts vacancy announcements on USAJOBS
- Accepts applications via Internet, phone, or fax
- Analyzes applicant competencies and qualifications
- Rates and ranks job applicants
- Produces and updates certificates
- Notifies applicants
- Manages applicant records

Phase I development of **USA STAFFING** will start during the 4th Quarter of FY 2003. To learn more about **USA STAFFING**, visit the Web at

www.opm.gov/hr/employ/whats\_new/index-usastaffing.htm

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## **High's Society**



Blanco T. (Skip) High

Call 911!

Blanco T. (Skip) High of OHRM's Human Resources Development (HRD) staff, was previously nominated and selected to be the Chair of the American Society for Training Development 2003 Program Advisory Committee. He is first federal employee to serve in the position. Mr. High is a Management Analyst in HRD and has represented VA at the local and national level. His major professional interests are in organizational learning and performance. Mr. High is also a VA mediator and a consultant member of the Society for Organizational Learning.

The American Society for Training Development (ASTD) is the world's premier professional development association in the field of workplace learning and performance. ASTD's membership includes more than 7,000 individuals from every level of the field of workplace learning and performance, from more than 100 countries. Its leadership and members are both internal and external practitioners, working in multi-national corporations, small and medium size businesses, government agencies, colleges, and universities.

Each year, ASTD conducts its International Conference and Exposition with speakers coming from around the world to make presentations on topics of global issues, emerging trends, and best practices. In addition to these educational sessions, there are conferences within-a-conference that offer the participants indepth learning experiences in specialized topics. It is the Program Advisory Committee that screens, ranks, and makes recommendations to the ASTD leadership for the content of the conference.

The Program Advisory Committee is composed of subject-matter experts from business, academia, and the public sector. The members are nominated and selected based on their contributions to the field of learning and development. It is their task to screen over a thousand proposals, and to rank and select approximately 250 that will make it into the conference program.

The ASTD 2003 International Conference and Exposition will be in San Diego, CA, from May 16-22. Although the majority of participants are students, practitioners, and managers, the conference is open to everyone. Registration fees cover over 200 educational sessions, workshops, and admittance to one of the Nation's largest expos of training and development books, tapes, software, and related materials.

### TECH TIPS!

This month's tips will provide you with new ways to perform everyday processing functions, such as cutting and pasting when using various Windows programs. These tips will help cut down on keystrokes, mouse-playing, and may even help you meet those deadlines a lot faster.

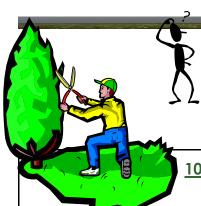
Control+V = Copy Control+B = Paste

Control+G = Goto Control+X = Cut

Control+Z = Undo Control+F = Find Text

Control+H = Replace Text

For technical assistance, please contact the H protessionals for your organization.



# Outside the Box



#### 10 Spring Lawn & Garden Tips

- 1. The best time to water your lawn is between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., but if that isn't possible, then afternoon waterings are okay. Lawn diseases are more apt to become a problem if you water when sun is absent, so avoid evening waterings. Contrary to the belief of many, daytime watering will not burn the grass in fact, it actually cools it.
- 2. As a general rule, most lawns require about one inch of water per week from rain or sprinkling.
- 3. When pruning trees, use pruning shears to remove diseased, dead or crisscrossing branches so light can reach the tree's interior, improving its health and appearance. Cut at an angle, and when possible, cut with an upward motion to avoid tearing bark.
- 4. Make sure no more than one-third of the grass blade is cut off each time you mow. It is recommended to mow at the higher setting during the warmer months and at the lower setting in the spring.
- 5. A perennial is a plant that returns year after year. An annual is a plant that lives and grows for only one year or season.
- 6. Wait at least 6-8 weeks between fertilizing feedings.
- Vary your mowing patterns. Mow in a different direction each time to reduce wear from mower wheels. Doing this also prevents the grass from "leaning" in one direction.
- 8. Don't over mulch! It is recommended that mulch is not more than 4 inches high in plant beds. Over-mulching can cause many problems if not corrected in a timely manner, including root oxygen starvation, inner bark death, disease & insect promotion, and chewing rodent harborage.
- 9. Dandelions grow in any soil and are most numerous in full sunlight. To control them, you have to eliminate the whole plant root and all.
- 10. Wearing a dust mask while working in the yard can help relive some sinus and allergy reactions.



April 22nd was the 33rd anniversary of Earth Day. VA cele-

brated this significant environmental milestone by joining the Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management for a special Earth Day program at VA Central Office. Rebecca R. Wodder, President of American Rivers, and John L. Howard, Jr., Federal Environmental Executive, joined William H. Campbell, Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, in providing remarks that gave an insider's view of Earth Day, progress made in protecting and preserving our environment, and challenges that lie ahead. Other highlights included award presentations to the Beverly National Cemetery Team, Beverly, New Jersey, and

Sharon Ricketts Williams, VA Illiana Health Care System. Danville, Illinois, winοf VA's ners "Closing the Circle" Award for 2003, the Department's environmental honor. Also as part of the festivities, the U.S. Kids preschool class, the "Butterflies," performed their rendition of "This Land is Your Land."



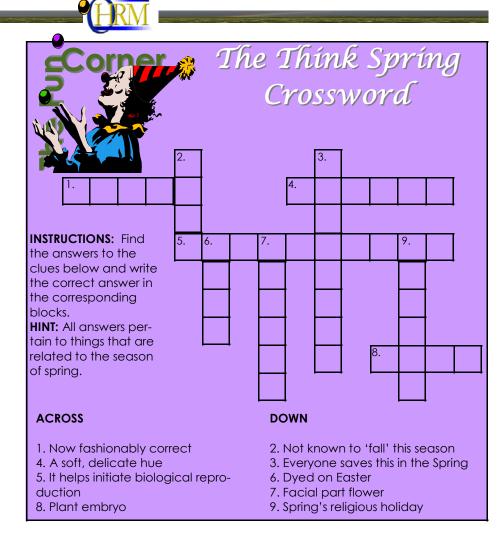
For ideas on specific actions you can take to protect the environment, information about events and activities in your community, or to find out about volunteer opportunities, visit the Earth Day web page at

http://www.va.gov/oa&mm/recycle/earthday.htm



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### **Comings and Goings**

Welcome to Alvertis Parrish-Ramsey, who joins the HR Architecture and Strategic Planning Staff and Therese Kilgore, who joins the Worklife and Benefits Staff.

Best Wishes to Alan Beale, David Will and Roy Coles.

